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Spotlight on Congress

CIA Security

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It is currently a crime for a Department of Agriculture employee to disclose marketing agreements. It is also a crime to disclose the names of borrowers from the land bank. It is a crime to disclose tax return information, confidential export reports, personal census data and responses on a Civil Service examination. However, it is not now a crime to identify intelligence employees, thus making them the targets of assassins around the world. The bill the House recently passed—the Intelligence Identities Protection Act—makes certain forms of disclosure of intelligence agents a criminal offense, punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000, or imprisonment for up to 10 years, or both.

Without the contribution of intelligence operatives and those who aid them, the United States would be without needed insights into the actual plans and intentions of foreign powers it must confront, or international problems it must solve. Furthermore, as the United States seeks to implement its foreign policy objectives, it sometimes requires the capability to use clandestine and covert activities to compliment its overt policy initiatives.

The disclosure of the identity of those conducting our covert operations would not only impair the effectiveness of our government's secret operations, but it would also jeopardize the lives of those individuals carrying out government intelligence-gathering activities.

In recent years, certain individuals, including former intelligence agents, have taken it upon themselves to discover and disclose the identities of undercover Central Intelligence Agency officers and other agents working for the security of the United States. They are clearly interested in exposing United States intelligence operatives in order to prevent our agents from performing their duties, thereby rendering the CIA and similar agencies powerless.

In 1975, U.S. diplomat Richard Welch was assassinated in Greece after a publication called *CounterSpy* identified him as a CIA agent. For several years, former CIA agent Phillip Agee has been living in exile after he fled the United States and was deported by Great Britain for his role in releasing classified CIA information, including the identity of several of his former colleagues in the agency.

Adoption of this legislation will not solve all the problems related to the preservation of the identity of undercover intelligence agents. It will, however, remove many of the present dangers which confront those brave Americans who are serving our country in covert missions around the world. This legislation to protect these individuals is not only necessary, but it is long overdue.